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THE Commonweal

Schizophrenia in the G.O.P.

WALTER DEAN BURNHAM

Africa and the Council

ARCHBISHOP DENIS E. HURLEY

Class Notes
from Vassar

*CAROL B. &
RICHARD M. OHMANN*

Tail End
of Summer

WILFRID SHEED

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SEPTEMBER 27, 1963

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The Quest for Freedom

The realization of freedom in the Church is an extraordinarily *difficult* task. It would be simple if she only had to fight for her freedom outwards, against the unfreedom of the world. It would be simple if only the Church were not, in her human activity, always a piece of the world herself. The very same institutions and constitutions, ministries and ordinances which according to their nature are meant to serve the freedom of the children of God can, against their nature, through the failures and sinfulness of men, be misused to bring about servitude.

The front in the battle between freedom and unfreedom runs through the middle of the human heart, through the middle of the Church with her institutions and constitutions. The threat to freedom from within is very much more dangerous and very much more difficult to fight than the threat from without. When freedom is threatened by the world outside, the Christian can find protection, refuge and freedom within the Church, the community of those who are truly free. When freedom is threatened from within, inside the Church herself, the Christian can only find protection, refuge and freedom alone in himself, in the fortress of his own free conscience. . . .

Certainly freedom, like so much that is good, is a dangerous thing. And more freedom in the Church means that the demand on the individual priest, theologian, layman is not for less but for more sense of responsibility, not for less but for more sense of order and authority, not for less but for more sense of genuine, free obedience. But the Catholic Church of today is surely ripe for all this.

—from *"The Church and Freedom"*

by Hans Küng
in the June 21 issue

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

The Church and Communism

IN THE PAST year it has become clear that relations between the Church and Communists have entered a new phase, one that has sent tremors through the far right and introduced apprehension across much of the political spectrum in this country.

When Pope John's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* proposed dialogue with Communists, this suggested to one *National Review* editor only that the Pope either did not know what Communism was all about, or had simply decided that the West was finished and it was time to prepare a place for the Church under world Communist rule. Though extreme, this reaction reflects the widespread astonishment over any attempt by the Church to come to grips with the problem of Communism, or to do anything about the dangerous division of the modern world beyond condemning the Communist bloc. When Pope John received Khrushchev's son-in-law, and treated him as one would expect a Christian to treat an opponent or sworn enemy, the cry went up that this was a betrayal of the anti-Communism of Pius XII (who, by the way, as he was condemning Communism as an ideology and political system, received in audience entire local units of Communists, and gave them his personal blessing).

And we have seen this apprehension grow amid proliferating signs of a different climate: the release of Archbishop Slipyi, the Soviet votes to award Pope John the Balzan Peace Prize, Soviet permission for Russian Orthodox observers to attend the Vatican Council, and the dampening of anti-Catholicism in some parts of the Communist world, though not in others. Most recently, we have seen the Hungarian regime allow the Vatican to name new bishops for the country's vacant sees, a concession the Vatican regards as crucial, and one the Communist regime had been reported holding for bargaining purposes.

Yet the value of the "new" approach to Commu-

nists does not depend on concessions won from dictatorial regimes. History is studded with misguided attempts by the Church to gain a bit of breathing room at the price of supporting a repressive regime; somehow the concessions have a way of boomeranging in the end. Pope John's approach, however, was not centered on bargaining, but on a genuine openness and a realization that ideologies are not permanent masters of men. His distinction between Communism and Communists, dismissed as trivial by the far right, allowed him to continue the Church's firm opposition to Communism as an ideology, while promoting overtures to Communists as men capable of change.

IN SHORT, in view of his deeply Christian view of the human person, his historical awareness of the fragility of ideologies, and his conviction that Christians cannot be content with condemnations as the world stands in jeopardy of nuclear war, Pope John promoted a dialogue with Communists to explore areas of possible cooperation. In one sense, this is a normal type of diplomatic contact which seems astonishing only because of the strange type of anti-Communism that equates discussion with weakness, indifferentism or treason. Proper distinctions are swept aside, and the only question becomes, "Has the Church changed her stand on Communism?" The negative answer then becomes a mandate for deploring all contact with Communists and simply building the walls higher. This ritual was observed again earlier this month when Pope Paul once again repeated the Church's opposition to Communism as an ideology, which the conservative press once again chose to construe as opposition to discussions with Communists.

Pope John's message was that it is no longer satisfactory to deal with Communism simply as a system—we must also deal with Communists as persons. Events have shown that Communism the unchanging ideology and Communism the political monolith

are myths. The ideology has changed in many important respects, and various pressures acting on the various centers of power within the Communist world multiply the opportunities for the West—and the Church—in dealing with the Communists. The Church has never restricted itself to dealing with friendly governments and friendly officials, and there is no reason why it should abandon that tradition now.

The Communist part of the world won't disappear, but it will change, and only fear can keep the Church from attempting to guide that change. In this area, Pope John's bequest was Christian optimism combined with a political realism that many who consider themselves realists failed to see. "He who has faith need not tremble," he wrote; "he does not rush the events nor need he pessimistically lose his nerve."

U.N.'s Eighteenth Session

IN A thermonuclear world the nearby Big Three negotiations which coincide with the opening of the General Assembly may well be of greater moment than the decisions of the delegates of 111 nations. Suppose Mr. Gromyko should evince to Dean Rusk and Lord Home a desire to utilize the momentum generated by the initialed test-ban treaty for further steps toward peace. One of the most auspicious signs for both the UN proceedings and Foreign Ministers' negotiations would assuredly be an announcement of Soviet willingness to pay up its back debts at the UN for dues and Congo and other operations.

The refusal of France and Soviet Russia to pay their share has put the organization's general finances in a precarious state. And it not only jeopardizes continuation of UN Congo and Middle East forces, but also critically reduces the prospect for other future "emergency operations." Moreover, what is the UN to do if by the end of the year Russia's arrears have reached the limit that the Charter prescribes for depriving member nations of their vote in the Assembly?

Because of Afro-Asian preoccupation with the colonial issue, much of the next three-months' debate will undoubtedly deal with such unresolved questions as Southwest Africa, technical assistance, Southern Rhodesia, Vietnam, the racial policies of South Africa and the Portuguese colonies. The fact that U Thant is to report to the Security Council on the latter two will heighten the tension when these issues are publicly discussed before this international forum. Since Mao has alienated India and the USSR, and the fourteen French-speaking African

members are counted on to continue their opposition, Communist China's admission to the UN is expected again to be rejected, despite the sentiment favoring its membership as a means of establishing contact with so major a segment of mankind.

All in all, this Assembly opens under more propitious circumstances than other recent sessions; its many-faceted effort to meet its worldwide responsibilities merits the continued and sympathetic attention of every American citizen.

Travel to Cuba

AMONG THE many rights which Americans take for granted, that of freedom to travel holds a high place. Only reasons of the utmost gravity can ever justify the withholding of this right by the government. In the case of travel to Cuba, however, it is by no means clear that the policy of the State Department is a wise or just one. At present, any American who desires to visit that country must receive special permission from the Secretary of State. That permission is not often granted, though it is difficult to estimate just how many requests have been denied. The reason for the ban, as we understand it, has little to do with American security. Instead, it is merely one part of the strategy of diplomatic pressure being applied against Cuba; the aim of the ban is to help isolate Cuba from the other nations of the Western hemisphere—apparently the State Department hopes that our practice will encourage other nations to do likewise.

From a diplomatic point of view, the ban makes a certain amount of sense. At any rate, it is part of a series of American moves against Cuba designed to bring about the downfall of the Castro regime without the risk of armed conflict. Nonetheless, the rigidity of the ban has some obvious shortcomings. For one thing, it does not distinguish between those who want some first-hand information about Cuba—those, in short, who have some professional or otherwise responsible reasons for observing Cuba with their own eyes—and those who might be called ordinary "tourists." For another, the ban rests so much in the hands of the State Department that there exist no convenient channels of appeal against an unfavorable decision. The right to travel thus depends upon an administrative fiat—even though, technically speaking, the Secretary of State does have the necessary legal authority to make such decisions. Taken together, there are good reasons why the State Department policy should be made more flexible, judicial and open.

Unhappily, the fifty-eight students who have just returned from a trip to Cuba have managed to

thoroughly obscure the just complaints about the present policy. They objected to the ban in the first place on the grounds that its aim was to keep Americans ignorant of the "truth" about Cuba; there is no good evidence to support that charge. They then chose to violate the ban by entering Cuba via Prague; and this lengthy, circuitous trip was paid for by the Cuban government. In Cuba itself they were given extraordinary treatment; not surprisingly, they responded enthusiastically to their hosts. One could hardly imagine a set of conditions less designed to show the truth about Cuba.

Still, despite the circumstances of the trip, the students returned with their public image relatively intact. At that point, as was bound to happen, the House Un-American Activities Committee entered the act. Ten of the students were subpoenaed to testify. Despite the subpoenas, there was still a chance that the students would stir up a certain amount of admiration. So many people over the years have been called before that committee, some on the flimsiest possible grounds of hearsay accusations and innuendoes, that its work has to be taken with a massive chunk of salt. In that respect, the students had much in their favor; all they had to do was to present a straightforward case of their right (even if extra-judicial) to travel and give some evi-

dence of their sincerity. The Committee might not have acquitted them, but the public and the press might have.

And what happened? In one of the crassest displays in recent years, the students promptly proceeded to throw away any chance of gaining a sympathetic hearing. They jeered, they laughed, they shouted. On repeated occasions they had to be ejected from the committee room. But more important, it gradually became clear that they were not just an ordinary group of "students." At least nine of them are reported to be members of the Progressive Labor Movement, an extreme left-wing organization sympathetic to Chinese Communist concepts of violent social revolution. To be sure, there appear to have been a few who went in a genuine quest of the truth; but it is almost impossible to credit the majority with every bit of the sincerity they professed.

It was an abysmal performance by a dubious group of actors. As a result, it will no doubt become harder than ever to get the State Department to change its Cuban travel policy. As much, if not more, than ever, there remains a great need for freer American access to Cuba. A good cause was badly served by the wrong people doing wrong things in the wrong way.

Walter Dean Burnham

Schizophrenia in the G.O.P.

*Unless all signs fail, we are now rapidly drifting into
an era of critical political realignment*

IN HIS RECENT book, *The Deadlock of Democracy*, Professor James M. Burns considers the workings of the political deadlock through which we have been living since 1938; he concludes that America really has not two political parties but four. This is, of course, an accurate observation of the political structure in which all of us have grown up. Everybody has heard of Northern and Southern Democrats, of conservative Midwesterners and liberal Easterners in the GOP, of the "Conservative Coalition" in Congress. The system as a whole is in remarkable homeostatic balance. Republicans and Democrats are almost evenly balanced in Congress and the

country outside the South. For a generation, therefore, there has been no clear-cut majority in favor either of advancing from the New Deal or repealing it.

But this homeostatic balance now seems at last to be breaking down. Unless all signs fail, we are now rapidly drifting into an era of critical political realignment comparable in scope to the upheavals of the 1890's and the 1930's. The most evident manifestations of this impending political revolution are: first, the extraordinary collapse of traditional Democratic hegemony in the South—the product both of industrialization and of the civil-rights revolution with which the Kennedy Administration has become so closely identified; and, second, the growth into respectability and mass size of the latest,

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reputedly "conservative," incarnation of a traditional fundamentalist strain in our political life. Both of these emergent features of the political landscape are creating strong hydraulic pressures on the Republican Party to nominate Senator Goldwater for the Presidency in 1964. This pressure in turn has generated the most severe crisis of conscience and strategy within the GOP since its origins in the anti-slavery movement a century ago.

What are the characteristics of critical elections and of the realigning political eras which surround them? The most obvious thing about such elections is their great historical rarity. Forty-four presidential elections have been held since the adoption of the Constitution. Of these, not more than five—the elections of 1800, 1828, 1860, 1896 and 1932—qualify as critical elections. Each of these elections had such far-reaching consequences for our constitutional and political history that they may be regarded more accurately as constituent acts of the electorate than as elections in the ordinary sense of the term.

Their importance has been two-fold. In the first place, they have marked major turning-points in the evolution of our political culture. They are decisive moments when the electorate chooses between sharply polarized alternative courses of political, economic and social action. Secondly, and consequently, they abruptly change the map of the political landscape throughout the country, bringing altogether new political coalitions into existence, drawing new lines between majorities and minorities, and usually initiating fundamental changes both in the composition of the electorate itself and in the organization structure of the political parties. Normally their direct effects upon the political system last for at least a generation. These effects seem to endure partially and indirectly almost indefinitely.

A CERTAIN chronological pattern can be detected as the political system moves toward an era of critical realignment. For a generation or so following the last realignment, the issues generated by it continue to be the main source of political rhetoric and partisan conflict. For example, the two parties fought elections from 1868 until well into the 1890's on civil-war, "bloody-shirt" issues and on the epiphenomenal question of tariff rates. As time progresses, these issues become less and less acute as reflectors of actual political problems and increasingly move into the realm of rhetoric designed to reinforce the partisan commitments of the faithful. Meanwhile, the evolution of the socio-economic structure creates acute new tensions and deprivations within the electorate and thus plant the seeds of new political issues to supersede the old.

But the parties resist the injection of these new issues into their system of ideology and political action. They do this for several reasons. For instance, the usual political style in the United States is one of brokerage and

compromise among established interests. Typically these new issues—such as the containment of slavery in the 1850's, the corporate control of industrialization in the 1890's, and positive government as counterpoise to corporate power in the 1930's—are of such overwhelming intensity that they cannot be handled by the usual processes of brokerage and compromise. The aftermath of the election of 1860 showed clearly enough that such issues have a marked civil-war potential.

This aspect of our political culture is, of course, coupled closely with the vested interests—economic, ideological and organizational—which the politicians of both parties have in maintaining the status quo. Both compromise as a political style and vested interest are joined to another basic reality of practical politics. In a closely competitive two-party situation, working politicians are usually most unwilling to jeopardize their chances of winning by taking an extremist or ideological stand on issues. They are not gamblers with the "swing vote," since they know that such voters are ideologically more or less indifferent. Parties, therefore, are usually marked both by candor and dissimulation. They must both stimulate and suppress political conflict. Naturally, they must present enough of the "pure" party doctrine and attack the other establishment with enough vigor to reinforce their hold on the faithful. But they must also normally be guided by the prudential imperatives of our political system into blurring certain kinds of dangerous issues as they face the uncommitted voter.

A time comes, however, when the two parties can no longer contain or suppress these newly-central issues which are too hot to handle comfortably. Some major event, be it purely political like the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, or purely economic like the Great Depression of 1929-33, acts as a massive catalyst. Suddenly enormous upheavals erupt in the formerly stable partisan commitments of the electorate. Whatever the proximate cause may be, the old safe, predictable political alignments are swept away with astonishing speed. At this point the "insurgents"—those who perceive their interests most fatally compromised by the older political order—will move either to capture control of one of the major parties or to erect a new one on the ruins of the old. The presidential election which follows will be the most savagely contested in a generation. The central new issue will be debated, in however distorted a form. A new majority and minority, a new political universe, will form to become the bedrock of political calculations and actions for decades to come. It is no accident that these critical elections have been traditionally called "revolutions" in the history texts.

THE LAST great realigning era—that of the 1930's—thrust the two parties into a more anomalous position than ever before in a history studded with anomalies; it brought the "four-party" situation described by Profes-

sor Burns into the open as never before. Prior to the Great Depression both parties had been controlled by conservatives—a control greatly facilitated by the extreme sectionalism of the political alignment of 1896. The New Deal superimposed a class-oriented politics on that older sectional alignment without completely superseding it. The Southerners who had controlled the Democratic Party nationally as well as locally now found themselves more and more strangers in their old “Jeffersonian” party home. Industrialization of the South and the subversive interest of the dominant groups in the New Deal coalition in the condition of the underprivileged propelled Southern whites away from their ancestral home and toward the Republicans.

By 1962 the Republicans found themselves with a larger Southern congressional delegation than they had had at any time since 1876. In 1962, Senator Hill of Alabama barely escaped defeat at the hands of James D. Martin, an ex-Dixiecrat turned Republican. Most significantly, Martin scored most heavily in the Black Belt—just that part of the state which, pursuing the goals of economic conservatism and white supremacy, had been the most solidly Democratic ever since the 1880’s. Following the integration crises at the Universities of Alabama and Mississippi, it has been widely commented in Washington that no one in the Deep South is a Kennedy Democrat any more. It may well be so.

But this regional factor would remain purely regional, as it did in 1948, were not another factor involved. The hard core of the Republican Party has remained committed to the obsolete ideologies, slogans and social pieties of nineteenth-century laissez-faire capitalism. Much of the party has thus taken on an increasingly ruralist, neo-Jeffersonian “states’-rights” outlook, in the face of a massive collectivization of American life—a collectivization for which the large industrial corporation is primarily responsible. Whether they are legally “public” or “private” enterprise, these colossal, anonymous power aggregates rely on bureaucratic command rather than rugged individualism; they must plan their activities far in advance; and they must coordinate

those activities constantly and intensively with those of public government. If it was anything at all, the New Deal was the formal legal and political recognition of this radically changed state of affairs. This is the fact of life which the northeastern wing of the Republican Party, at the center of the command structure of the American economy, has generally come to accept. It is the refusal of the Right to accept the implications, or even the reality, of all this which has produced the deepening split within the national Republican Party.

This leftward curve of political and economic development at home and abroad necessarily implies that the political system is moving further and further away from the Rightists’ ideologically fixed position, regardless of which party is in control of the White House and Congress. This drift is linked with the extraordinarily rapid fading of “the American century” since 1945, the rise to world power of a Soviet enemy from whom we cannot demand unconditional surrender, and the awakening of the ex-colonial colored peoples all over the world. Together these developments have produced a real crisis which is centered less on economic-class issues than on a collision between two radically different political cultures within the United States: a collision between those who are seeking to come to terms with the demands of this century in order to remain relevant to it, and those who believe that a return to “that old-time religion” is the sole path of salvation. As events unfold, the latter have naturally become much more compulsive and radical in their outlook.

THE STAGE is thus set for another of our epochal contests between the technically, intellectually and economically advanced urban areas of Northeast and Far West on one side and the political fundamentalists of small-town America, the South and much of the Midwest on the other. The angry insurgents this time—ominously, for the first time in our history—come almost exclusively from the far Right. They seek the nomination of Senator Goldwater—a man who will be able finally to consummate the marriage between Southerners and Right-wing Republicans and fight the battle of 1896 all over again with legions of adherents drawn from Bryan’s lost cause.

The Right-wing insurgents against the sophisticated conservatism which has dominated both presidential parties since the war are now hard at work on the apparatus of the Republican Party. They have a good chance of capturing it at the 1964 convention. Scarcely had the returns of the 1962 election been tabulated than Senator Goldwater’s Right-wing supporters pointed to the Southern upheaval as proof that a “conservative”—i.e., a narrowly business-oriented, states’-rights, just-shy-of-racist—candidate could sweep the whole South and interior of the country. Even before Governor Rockefeller’s remarriage, polls of the 1960 convention



delegates revealed a substantial plurality who personally favored Senator Goldwater.

Since that remarriage, every passing week has seen his star sink lower toward the horizon. Then at the end of June a Right-wing-Birchite coalition captured control of the Young Republican convention in San Francisco amid scenes of wild disorder and intimidation. It then proceeded to elect an ardent Goldwater supporter, Donald E. Lukens, to the presidency of the organization. Goldwater himself addressed the convention on the evils of big-city machines and received an enthusiastic ovation. Finally, on July 14, Governor Rockefeller, in a remarkable public statement, declared open war upon the "radical Right" within the GOP and upon Senator Goldwater himself. It may well be that this was a move of desperation on Rockefeller's part—perhaps desperation at the present state of his own political fortunes, and certainly desperation at the success which the Right-wing has been enjoying in its efforts to capture the Republican Party in 1964 and make it a clear-cut political vehicle for its ideology.

What was the substance of Rockefeller's attack? (1) The radical Right, which captured control of the Young Republicans, employed totalitarian tactics to gain their ends, in complete disregard of the party's and the country's traditions. (2) These people are "purveyors of hate and distrust." (3) They have no concern for problems of unemployment, housing, education or racial strife—no concern, that is, for just the problems which are especially vital to the newer America of the metropolitan centers. (4) They propose an unholy union of reactionary forces around "the outlawed and immoral base of segregation." (5) They propose as well to write off any serious effort to win the votes not only of Negro and minority groups, but also of the entire industrial North where half the population of the country lives. Instead they rely upon "a program based on racism or sectionalism" which, if successfully carried out, would mean the moral and physical destruction of the party itself.

Rockefeller is much less convincing when he seeks to parry the Right-wing charge that a Kennedy-Rockefeller contest would give the voters no real choice, by accusing the Administration of financial profligacy, softness toward Communism and apparently sole responsibility for the racial crisis. From the far Right's perspective, after all, a contest between Kennedy and Rockefeller (or Scranton or Romney) would be as much a sham battle as it would be to the Communist Party, and for essentially the same reasons.

Rockefeller has quite accurately pinpointed the strategy which the rightist insurgents have developed to win the Republican Party and the country. Ever since the Industrial Revolution got underway a century and more ago, the basic political question before the house has been whether capitalism and political democracy

can coexist indefinitely within the same society. The American people have insisted, with no small success, on having the benefits of both; but the hidden dilemma remains. This country, alone in the Western world, developed political democracy and universal suffrage *before* the advent of industrial capitalism. As the inevitable tensions and pressures of the industrializing process mounted toward the great depression of the 1890's, the industrializing elites here were faced, as nowhere else in the world, with the real danger of being overthrown or at least severely restricted by non-elites working through constitutional and democratic means.

IT WAS this which made 1896 such a decisive election. The political system which came into being at this time bore two major characteristics. In the nation as a whole, it was marked by an extreme sectionalism which gave the Republicans a quasi-permanent majority. In very large part this sectionalism seems to have been based upon the patent irrelevance of the Democrats' obsolescent ruralist-Populist appeal to the voters of the urban Northeast, workers and industrialists alike. In the South the basis of local Democratic hegemony was white supremacy, made possible by the white North's abandonment of the Southern Negro to the tender mercies of his former masters. Racism vastly enhances the position of those who control the local power structure, since it suppresses conflict between the parties and unites all interests and classes within the white population against the excluded Negroes. Sectionalism produces the same anti-democratic effects in a more diffuse fashion.

Taken as a whole, the "system of 1896," based as it was squarely on racism and sectionalism, robbed democracy of a vast part of its substance without doing away with its forms; it permanently distorted and deflected the evolution of the American party system. Creating local party monopolies throughout the country, it was an excellent analogue to the rapid growth of economic monopoly during the same period. For a long generation thereafter, the ruling business classes were left a free hand to do their work on their own terms with minimal interference from politicians or from the mass



electorate. Why should we not try to profit from their example?

Governor Rockefeller is also quite right when he insists that capture of the GOP by these radical-right elements would destroy the party as we have known it. It would be blown to pieces in the industrial states as completely as were Bryan's Democrats in 1896. It might well be that, to save their own skins, Republican liberals would have no choice but to go over to their erstwhile Democratic adversaries and make common cause with them against the new fundamentalism. Just such desertions from their parties by leading politicians happen quite frequently in eras of critical realignment—for example, Grover Cleveland in 1896, or Al Smith and John W. Davis in the 1930's. On the ruins of the old parties might well arise a new system—that politician's nightmare, two disciplined, issue-oriented parties. Would this not be the millennium for which programmatic liberals and social scientists have waited so long? One wonders. Liberals commonly suppose that Goldwater's nomination would ensure a Republican catastrophe in November. But would it?

A chilling possibility emerged recently in personal discussions I have had with knowledgeable political observers—especially with a prominent member of Congress. Suppose that the racial crisis reaches an acutely violent stage during the next year, both in the South and in northern cities. Suppose further that white Americans react by hardening themselves against Negro demands, especially the property-conscious householders in the metropolitan areas. Suppose finally that the radical Right succeeds in capturing the GOP next summer, imposes its respectable racism, ruralism and know-nothingism on it and turns it into an explicitly “white man's party.” Might not the new “conservative” coalition have an excellent chance to win a decisive victory as the Party of Order?

While this seems to be an unlikely prospect at the moment, some such fears seem to lurk beneath the surface of Governor Rockefeller's blast at the Right. In any case, this exercise in supposition illuminates three aspects of the present crisis which should not be overlooked. In the first place, it is by no means clear that there is any kind of majority within white America for any solution to the civil-rights agony which goes beyond a conscience-salving tokenism. Violent reactions to the insecurities this problem poses are by no means out of the question among many white Americans outside the South. President Kennedy is probably entirely right when he says that there is no political mileage to be gained by anyone who is trying conscientiously to cope with the vast moral and social travail which the civil-rights issue has brought out into the open. Secondly, there is not now and probably there will not be in the immediate future any “liberal” majority in this country whatever—at least so long as the active electorate re-

mains at between one-half and two-thirds its potential size.

Finally, it is an appalling commentary on the dangerous immaturity of our political culture that the extreme Right has won such a substantial mass base and such lavish financial support with so little to offer. Those who are promoting Senator Goldwater so assiduously are as morally and intellectually bankrupt as Governor Rockefeller accuses them of being. Their program, if such it can be called, is a study in negativism: repeal the income tax or at least make it non-progressive; crack down on “welfare chiselers”; more states' rights; billions upon billions for defense, but not one cent for welfare; total victory over Communism, thought of in wholly military terms; laissez-faire forever. They have nothing to say at all to half the nation's population, as Rockefeller points out. Many of them are fiercely, if covertly, anti-democratic to the core; they have obviously made their choice between democracy and capitalism, long before any such choice has actually become necessary. They are the Unhappy Warriors of the Cold War, the Know-Nothings of our time.

ROCKEFELLER seems to be combatting these elements in the GOP by recourse to something like Theodore Roosevelt's liberal nationalism. In particular he seems to be trying to substitute conflicts within the Party by taking as intransigent a foreign-policy stand against the Democrats as the most ardent Goldwaterite could wish. His August 11 statement on the partial nuclear test-ban treaty questions pointedly whether the treaty should have been negotiated at all, implies that the Administration is being childishly optimistic about agreements with the Soviets, and insists that we must keep our guard up—something that the Administration shows every intention of doing anyhow. After thus praising the treaty with loud damns, the Governor grudgingly advises the Senate to advise and consent to it solely because our prestige is committed and popular opinion at home and abroad would not stand for a rejection.

The strategy here seems plain. By being more royalist than the king in foreign policy, Rockefeller is trying to do two things: firstly, to forestall right-wing claims that there would be no real choice if he or another sophisticated conservative ran against President Kennedy; secondly, to shift the main axis of political conflict away from domestic issues—especially the explosively dangerous race issue—and toward foreign-policy disputes with the Democrats. It is particularly important for Rockefeller to succeed in this endeavor. Not only is the party, even as currently constituted, vulnerable on domestic issues, but the substitution of a foreign-policy conflict for one based on domestic questions would serve the same function of conflict-suppression at home as sectionalism and racism have served in the past—and

without the moral opprobrium which they bear at present. Success in substituting one conflict for the other would defer party realignment for a considerable time. It would also defer any systematic governmental effort to deal coherently with the growing mares' nest of domestic social problems, and thus necessarily defer indefinitely the integration into the political system of the 40,000,000 deprived adult Americans who are now outside it.

Even if this strategy worked, however, the price exacted for success would be initially very high and would rise steeply thereafter. James Reston and other commentators have recently been stressing a truth to which most of our politicians have turned a deaf ear for years: that the most formidable challenge Communism presents is not its weapons system but its idea system, and that we are most unlikely to succeed in coping with it if we think militarily and let things go to pot at home. Yet exacerbation of the public's Cold War phobias for the sake of papering over an incipient party realignment would not only have the effect of continuing this domestic stagnation, but also of stimulating the growth of the very forces which Rockefeller detests so much.

The dilemmas which the Republican Party and the country are facing as a result of these developments are very real. The Party may very well decide to pull back from the brink and nominate a man like Governor Romney, who can be expected to obscure as many issues as possible. But the underlying forces thrusting us toward party realignment are still at work. The Cold War continues systematically to distort the political culture and to stimulate the growth of radical-right movements among the insecure. The civil-rights revolution is probably just the beginning of a quickening public awareness that major steps to put our domestic economy and social structure in order are urgently required if the country is to remain worth living in. But any such awareness must actively promote expansion of the public sector and increased federal involvement in economic and social life. Such expansion in turn must run headlong into the inflexible 19th-century Manchester liberalism which still grips the consciousness of the propertied classes in this country. So the drift toward showdown continues. At its end we shall know whether, despite everything, we have managed to preserve both capitalism and political democracy.

DENIS E. HURLEY

Africa and the Council

The West is getting the drubbing it deserves

THERE ARE no doubt enthusiasts of the missionary cause who felt that the Second Vatican Council was the opportunity the missions were waiting for to shake up the tired old churches of the ancient world. But it is the tired old churches that are doing the shaking, the churches that were mission territory when Gregory the Great was getting things into shape for the long haul of the Dark Ages.

These are the churches that have held fanatically to the belief that what is most human in man is reason. Reason at the service of faith is theology and without theology you don't have councils. Theology is not very strong yet in missionary areas of Asia and Africa and that is why the influence of the mission countries in the Council is indirect rather than direct. Indirect, because the ancient churches have learned a lot from their missionary experiences in Asia and Africa, and all this is coming out in the Council. The missionary areas are, of

course, playing a strong supporting role. In general, they are right behind the theological transalpsines, finding that their own instinctive reactions echo the reflective conclusions of European Catholicism's gigantic reappraisal.

In a way you can say that it is Europe's fault that the missions are not very theological. The great missionary drive of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was mounted from Europe and this drive did not carry much theology with it. Technically it was Europe's fault, but in reality Europe could not do very much about it. She had very little theology for export. When the angry young French-speaking *abbés* of Africa have absorbed more of Europe's nineteenth-century history they will perhaps be a little more tolerant of the missionary failings of the West. If the missionaries drove the faith like a cart-and-horse through African culture, it was because they had no missiology; and this was lacking in them because theology in general was frightfully emaciated in the post-Revolution period. But theology is awakening in the missions now and French-speaking

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Africa, comprising a big proportion of the west and center of the continent, provides one of the liveliest if not the liveliest theological cockpit of the contemporary mission world. The French and Belgian missionaries have left their mark, and *la pensée* reaches out for its sovereignty in religious life as in other spheres.

IT IS something of a surprise for representatives of English-speaking Africa to discover the general cultural fermentation that is going on apace in the French-speaking section. At the heart of it is the *Société Africaine de Culture* with its periodical *Présence Africaine*. The movement is deeply committed to resolving the schizophrenic conflicts resulting from the imposition of Western culture on African psychology. The incurably Cartesian French, as is well known, love ideas so much that they endow them with personality, consciousness and feeling and then proceed to suffer excruciatingly in sympathy with them. Having learned the trick from the French the francophonic intellectuals of Africa are making tremendous play of *négritude*, *présence Africaine*, "alienation" and what not.

Behind these platonized and personalized ideas are, of course, the grim realities of people who have suffered the crushing humiliation of colonization and who are inwardly torn by the necessity of using the very thing that humiliated them to get even with it. When they feel really bad they hand it out to the West in no uncertain measure, and when you remember all the West has done, you bow your head and take it with whatever humility you can muster.

There is a theological ferment corresponding to this cultural ferment and it has its fair share of *angoisse* too. It is concerned with giving the Church its African incarnation, if I may be forgiven the term. Adaptation is the watchword—adaptation in catechetics, in liturgy, and in the philosophical underpinning that must link Revelation to African reality. Adaptation is the word.

Or it was. For someone has noticed that adaptation implies the accommodation to Africa of what brings its own proper form from elsewhere. To speak, therefore, of adapting the Church with its catechetics and liturgy is to admit that the Western dress of the Church is in some way native to it—which of course is outrageous. Between African intellectuals and Patriarch Saigh Maximos IV, the West is getting the drubbing it deserves.

What is happening in francophonic Africa ensures that the bishops of that area are, without hesitation, heart and soul with the progressives in the Council. The one big shock they suffered in Rome was to discover that the anglophonics live in a different world. Quite obviously they had taken their gallic intellectualist approach as characteristically African. Judge of their horror when they discovered in their confrères of Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Tanganyika the cautious empirical approach of the British pragmatist, whose first reaction

on encountering an idea is to treat it as a proximate occasion of sin.

The relatively dour anglophonics seem immune to interior conflicts and cultural-religious *angoisse*. As far as they are concerned their people have received the Faith in its Western European trappings, adapted to some extent to African requirements (for instance, in the matter of vocal accompaniment, to, as distinct from participation in, the Mass), and seem quite satisfied with the situation. There are weaknesses, of course, but where in the world and in all history has the Church succeeded in Christianizing a society one hundred percent in two or three generations? Agonizing francophonic *abbés* can talk of evangelization without Christianization, but the anglophonics feel that a lot has been achieved and still more will be accomplished with patience, hard work and dedication.

God's good time, they hold, is also time enough for African art and African liturgy. These things are the outcome of the slow fusion of faith and psychology. You have to give them time. Doctrinaire experts from Europe will do more harm than good. They can easily be hoodwinked into making liturgical use of love-song melodies and martial music. There is also the problem of language. In some parts of Africa the language changes with every clan or tribe. Whose home language are you going to use at Mass when ten languages are competing for recognition in one center? Selecting one may easily produce a martial quality in the liturgy.

HASTY changes, they say, will confuse the people. The concrete image is of great importance in African thought. Change the image and the people may think that you are changing the reality. So there is every reason to proceed with caution. The curious thing about this British-style, phlegmatic approach is that it has been communicated with British educational methods and programs through the minds and hearts of missionaries of a dozen non-British nationalities. Despite the caution, one gets the impression that when the chips are down the anglophonic Africans, like their colleagues from other continents, remember Runnymede or something and vote for liberty.

These two somewhat divergent tendencies of Catholic Africa, the francophonic and the anglophonic have had some contact with each other through the organization of an *ad hoc* Secretariat for Africa and Madagascar. The Secretariat is, in the main, the product of white missionary initiative imbued with the get-together-or-bust spirit that keeps the airlines of the world in flight and its conference halls congested.

There is not the same enthusiasm in both groups for the operations of the Secretariat. The francophonic outstrips the anglophonic. Nevertheless, during the first session of the Council the English-speaking section made good use of the facilities offered by the Secretariat

for the organization of lectures and discussions. In this regard, it probably provided the best programs available in English.

When joint French and English meetings were held, the usual deficiencies of such meetings were in evidence. One got the impression, as one often does at such get-togethers, that a little rubber-stamping was being engineered. The English-speaking world will always be at a disadvantage in gatherings run in disregard of its own Marquess of Queensberry rules for debate. Democracy to English-speakers means, even among bishops, that a joint resolution emerges slowly and painfully from the friction of mind on mind, that the function of a chairman is to organize the friction and not get involved in it, and that there are sacrosanct rules for proposing, seconding, amending and so forth. Men to whom such procedure is a religion feel ill at ease when, instead of hunting a resolution in debate, they find the resolution is hunting them. As regards the Council in general, the English-speaking world is not in the same theological league as the transalpiners, but on procedure we could show them something.

The Secretariat for Africa and Madagascar also busied itself helping African bishops with their Council speeches. Its signature tune was, "In the name of the bishops of Africa, Madagascar and the Isles," until a few bishops from Africa, Madagascar and the Isles threatened to throw somebody into the Tiber.

The Secretariat may be the beginning of greater things—some form of permanent consultation at continental level—though one does not gather that the thrust in that direction has built up much compression yet, particularly among the pragmatic anglophonics. Their problems do not appear to be sufficiently acute to warrant continental treatment. Yet whatever comes of the Secretariat, the Church in Africa will be forever grateful to the Second Vatican Council. It is giving us the feel and the sense of the episcopate. No doubt it is doing the same for every bishop participating. But the experience has particular significance for Africa coming as it does at a critical moment in history when the Church in Africa is bursting out of adolescence.

Suddenly we are vividly conscious of our oneness with the sees of the ancient East and West and with the more recently established sees of America and Asia. Suddenly we are vividly aware that we belong with Nicea and Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon and Trent, and our unpretentious churches and thatched bush chapels assume a new glory. At the end of the first session I thought I could detect a new confidence in the stride of the African bishops, both the authentically black and the under-exposed, and a new ring of confidence in their voices. Maybe it was only imagination. This much, however, is true: no one enjoyed the long sessions in St. Peter's more than the Africans, for all-in debate, like music, is still a great art in Africa.

CAROL B. & RICHARD M. OHMANN

Class Notes from Vassar

Mary McCarthy's imagination suspends no behavioral laws

CLASS NOTES in the Vassar (or, for that matter, Smith or Wellesley or Radcliffe) *Alumnae Magazine* read very much alike. Occasionally, a graduate harnesses a dog team to carry penicillin to the Eskimos or breaks the record for the woman's parachute jump. But mainly the Notes tell us of marriages made, babies born, husbands promoted, committees formed, M.A.'s finished at last, and part-time jobs acquired. All these events are greeted with enthusiasm. Divorce is entered, if at all, without comment. Death receives a ready, though brief, expression of sympathy. And space, it is said, forbids any more news until the next issue, which, however, almost always resembles the last.

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It is in the intervals of silence left by the Notes that Mary McCarthy speaks, in her latest novel, *The Group* (Harcourt, Brace. \$5.95.). She chooses to discover her heroines—there are eight of them—in June, 1933, one week after they have graduated from Vassar. College has taught them to "put out their antennae," to forget the prejudices of their privileged homes and discover the world for themselves. What they discover is, immediately, disconcerting. A week after graduation, Kay Strong, the most progressive girl of the group, marries a sardonic playwright in the chapel of St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church in Stuyvesant Square. Part way through the service, Dottie Renfrew remembers that Kay is a scientific atheist and wonders if God would wish her to halt the ceremony. She decides, womanfully, that He would not. A few days more, and Dottie, open-

minded once again, ventures to be seduced in a rented room in Perry Street. A few months more, and Kay's husband deceives her, with still another member of '33.

In her mind, Helena Davison, the Class Correspondent, composes a "new version" of Notes—not for publication but for private consumption only: "Washington's Birthday Report. Yestreen I saw Kay Strong Petersen's new husband in Norine Schmittlapp Blake's arms. Both were looking well, and Kay is expecting a promotion at Macy's. Later in the evening the guests were treated to a ceremonial manuscript-burning. Kay served Fish House Punch, from an old colonial recipe. Kay and Harald have an elegant apartment in the East Fifties, convenient to the river, where Harald will be able to throw himself when his marriage goes 'on the rocks.' Re this, Anthropology major Dottie Renfrew opines that the little things, like lying, become so important in marriage. If she married a man who was a born liar, she would conform to his tribal custom. How about this, '33? Write me your ideas and let's have a really stimulating discussion." The tone of bright enthusiasm is still there. But so are the facts. And the two do not lie peacefully down together.

MARY MCCARTHY, we have often heard, is clever and satirical. And, we have also heard, she is merciless and bitter and she holds to no values, save, rather smugly, to the value of her own honesty. These last charges rest, of course, on inference. In her fiction, however much she may borrow character and event from life, Miss McCarthy does not speak *in propria persona*. Nor does she write from any particular point of view that may be safely taken to represent *her* point of view. She seems as elusive as Joyce's young artist, "like the God of the creation . . . within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork."

And yet in her non-fiction Miss McCarthy is as ready as Orwell or Camus or Baldwin to stand up and be counted. She tells us, as well as anyone has, that Hiroshima is a unique event with unique implications; it should not be entrained with Chicago's fire and dispatched to statistical oblivion with all our familiar fatalities. When Miss McCarthy admires Gandhi, she chooses to emphasize his character rather than his politics. And Trotsky also receives her applause for qualities that have no necessary relation to his ideology—he was simple, matter-of-fact, "hospitably open to hazard and accident." She urges us to consider freedom not as a right which can hang upon circumstance and the State's generosity but as an axiomatic good which cannot. The atom bomb exploded, she tells us, "in the moral world." And in that world, too, we hear, most typically, the reverberations of her own convictions.

How, then, are we to reconcile the cutting satirist (whose dissection, according to Clifton Fadiman, leaves behind a "nasty mess") with the forthright spokesman

for humane values? It might seem that Mary McCarthy answers to a classical definition of the satirist: her own moral standards are high; the world she knows founders in their foothills; and she notes and records the difference. Her heroine in *The Company She Keeps* awakens believing that she lies alone in her pullman berth only to acknowledge in a moment that, no, she lies instead in a compartment beside that stranger who has long since removed his shirt and the rest of his Brooks Brothers ensemble. Still, a crucial element is missing from the classical formula. Where is the traditional satirist's savage indignation? his bid to the reader: come, loathe with me? Miss McCarthy doesn't really invite us to such a banquet of superiority and condemnation, either in *The Company She Keeps* or in the rest of her exquisitely clinical novels.

If Mary McCarthy's aim is not to expose, in the strong sense—to trace the lineaments of venality, to hold the glass up to folly and weakness—what, then, is she about? Something very close to satire in method, we would say, but quite remote in conception and tone. Among other things, and importantly, Miss McCarthy is a realist. Her aim is to expose, but in the weaker sense: to display, to reveal. Like Conrad, she would "make you see."

In a *Partisan Review* essay, "The Fact in Fiction," she proposes what today must count as a rather unfashionable view of the novel. Its "distinctive mark," she says, "is its concern with the actual world, the world of fact, of the verifiable, of figures, even, and statistics." She adduces Balzac's chapter on the making of paper, Melville's whaling digressions, Mann's passages on tuberculosis, and the "refractory lumps" of fact in Dostoevsky, Dickens, Tolstoy. Whatever this may tell us about *The Novel*, it tells us something about Miss McCarthy's conception of her *métier*. She, too, writes as if to record a stretch of the real world's happenings, strangely overlooked by newsreels, gossip columns, and the *Class Correspondent*, but no less real for that.

MORE than most of her exemplary novelists, she restricts herself to that reality, uncompounded by fable, myth, or symbol. She suspends no physical or behavioral laws; her imagination works within them, within her own experience. And she does instruct us about the way things are. *The Groves of Academe* is a none-too-grotesque handbook of the progressive college; *A Charmed Life* is faithful to the mores of a village very like Wellfleet, Cape Cod; and *The Group* could hardly be transposed to any place but New York, or any time but the thirties. Miss McCarthy's work is stocked with cookery, cocktails, and manners, contraceptives, clothes, and modish ideas, all tailored to reality.

But to say as much is to come only part way toward an understanding of her realism. Notoriously, the notion of reality eludes simple definition; what is plainly the real world to one man may, to another, be an intellectual

fabrication. Miss McCarthy's fictional world, to be sure, displays prominently the substantial furniture she so values in the work of other writers, but with her the visible surface of reality enters the novel through the filter of her characters' minds. As we have said, she nearly always tells her story from, or through, the consciousness of this or that character. For the true locus of her reality is internal. The characteristic "facts" in her fiction, the ones that most stir her inquisitiveness, are bulky, convoluted, ingenious, and of the psyche: the civil wars of conscience, the skirmishes of feeling, the stratagems of face-saving.

ONE EVENING in *The Group*, for instance, Harald Petersen comes home with a pint of gin and his job lost behind him. In the next hour, and the next thirteen pages, Harald drinks; Kay turns a can of beans into a baking dish, dresses a salad, sets the table. Husband and wife talk a little. But the action and the dialogue are barely perceptible; it is Kay's anxieties that take center stage. Very likely, Harald will refuse now to move into their new apartment. The rent is high (\$102.50), and Kay had to talk to Harald into it (and the modern couch and chairs). Might Harald—it is possible—have lost his job deliberately? Just to spite her? No, that's too unfair. She must sympathize, not accuse. She must try to see why Harald had to insult his director.

Yet she must also sift Harald's story; Vassar taught her to gather in all the evidence. What would her Dads think? That a responsible man would have held his tongue? Still, Harald's job was a hard one. Priss Hartshorn thought so, too. Harald had only an hour for dinner, even though he was married and everyone at the theater knew it. Like assault troops on D-Day, Kay's worries tumble out willy-nilly, the practical shoulder to shoulder with the moral, the banal with the basic.

Self-torture of this kind, in response to unruly circumstance, is the groundwork of Miss McCarthy's art, and her particular genius is the ability to make the spirit's interminable squirmings continually valid and surprising: Jim Barnett's unlovely efforts to rid his conscience of Margaret Sargent (*The Company She Keeps*), or Domna Rejnev's arcane Slavic scruples in the case of Henry Mulcahy (*The Groves of Academe*), or Martha Sinnott's legalistic mental commentary on her seduction by her ex-husband (*A Charmed Life*). Miss McCarthy is at her best when she surveys the inner landscape. She produces, in fact, that commodity which she finds such a rarity in the modern novel: character.

Unfortunately, in achieving it by her particular method, she creates a major barrier to an adequate appreciation of her work. A large portion of what passes as human thought is—let us confess it—indecorous. The mind promiscuously surrounds the clear thought and

the noble (or evil) impulse with the commonplace, the dishonest, the muddled, the irrelevant, the fatuous. Heroic literature censors all this as subversive; Miss McCarthy releases it. And, worse, she does so from the inside. Thus, to the tone of gossip, which she rightly claims is indigenous to the novel, she adds an element of voyeurism, the more insidious because she has seen the truth. No one, the reader is tempted to say, should know *that* much about . . . me? For the reader does feel discovered, spied out in the middle of a slightly disreputable act. What Miss McCarthy said of her intention in writing "Artists in Uniform" might well have been given a broader reference: "I wanted to embarrass myself and, if possible, the reader too." Embarrassment is not a comfortable emotion, and to cultivate it as Miss McCarthy has is indeed to run the risk of being thought merciless or nasty.

Yet the McCarthyan embarrassment deserves a more sympathetic analysis than it has had, for it marks an area of great intensity in her fiction, and one that attracts as well as repels. When one is embarrassed, he acknowledges with chagrin and writhing a discrepancy between his golden image of personal triumph (or modesty, or generosity, or invulnerability—whatever the ideal happens to be) and the sorry spectacle he has just been implicated in. The feeling rests upon an intimate involvement of the ego in the situation at hand. It is essentially selfish. But to be embarrassed for another person is to take on, in some measure, the burden of that person's being. An identification takes place—"as if it were I." Second-hand embarrassment may not be precisely *charity*, but at least it is a first step, and in eliciting it from her readers, Miss McCarthy is drawing on a potentially humane response.

Consider: who are the fictional characters with whom we feel great embarrassment, and why? Elizabeth Bennett, in *Pride and Prejudice*, as she awakens to her ill-treatment of Darcy. Levin in *Anna Karenina*, over his almost saintly shyness. Dickens' Pip, for the anguished gaucheries of his growing-up, and Stephen Daedalus for the same reason. Embarrassment accompanies the sharpest evocations of character, and often the most generous.

SURELY the reader does not come to such an identification with a character unless the writer has done so. Miss McCarthy testifies to the importance of the process in her own work: when she wrote *The Groves of Academe*, for instance, she "wanted to know just how it felt to be raging inside the skin of a Henry Mulcahy," radically different as he is from her—"did we belong to the same species or not?" ("Characters in Fiction"). In other words, she stretched her powers of empathy to the extreme limits. Now, Mulcahy is a liar, a cheat, and a blackmailer, a "moral leper" who nonetheless makes extravagant claims on the love of his colleagues; and in

a sense he must have made the same claim on Miss McCarthy.

To be sure, she explicitly abjures "*Tout comprendre, c'est pardonner*" as her motive, yet it is hard to escape the conclusion that so accurate, so understanding, so balanced a portrait could never have proceeded from outrage or malice. In putting on the skins of her characters, refusing to see them from the outside as mere monsters or specimens, she shows a kind of respect for the fact of character. A version of love animates her portrayals even of her moral lepers, and *a fortiori* of those much more numerous characters who are well-intentioned but fallible.

In *The Group*, Kay dies at twenty-nine, without ever growing "older or wiser." And the rest of the group, as they assemble for her funeral, show that they, too, have changed very little. Lakey, who was mortified at the anomalies in Kay's wedding, is determined that the funeral will be perfect. Priss, who used to work for the N.R.A. before she had her baby, thinks three psalms are too many, too ostentatious. Libby—she has recently married an historical novelist "in the family garden, with an Elizabethan pageant and Purcell played on recorders in the gazebo"—wishes they had had pall-bearers; it would have been more impressive. And Polly remembers to remember, from time to time, that Kay is dead. The funeral, then, catches the girls with their shortcomings showing. Yet, reading the funeral scene, we pass beyond embarrassment for the girls to sympathy.

The characters in *The Group* are comic; they do not develop, as Miss McCarthy herself has said (to Elisabeth Niebuhr in the *Paris Review*). Never older, never wiser, they are constitutionally off guard. Experience reaches them as a continual surprise, something they could never have imagined and, now that it is here, something they can scarcely credit. And their enduring wonder speaks not of their creator's cynicism but of her willingness to confront, again and again, and perhaps even reverence, things as they are.

Among the new plays that Mary McCarthy chronicled for *Partisan Review* during the late thirties and the forties, the one she most valued was *Our Town*, that uninhibited celebration of the present moment and the

commonplace happening. She responded warmly to Wilder's theme: "the tragic velocity of life, the elusive nature of experience, which can never be stopped or even truly felt. . . ." The theme is Miss McCarthy's, too, even in *Cast a Cold Eye*, where she gathers the least magnanimous of her stories. In *A Charmed Life* she goes farthest toward preserving, through compassion, fidelity, and comedy, the moment that passes, and *A Charmed Life* is the best of her novels. But *The Group* is from the same fabric. In it, too, satire is assimilated to poignancy, though scarcely with the ingenuousness of Thornton Wilder.

Far more than she admires Wilder, Miss McCarthy holds Tolstoy in awe; she "would like, more than anything else," to write as he did, though she despairs of doing so: readers of her work, she says, "will be at a loss to find any connection with Tolstoy." Certainly most of her critics have failed to see in her work even a trace of his largeness, but we think that the critics have been unjust. Granted, she is not Tolstoy, but the *connection* is there.

Each Spring the Arbutus

Each spring the underfoot arbutus
boxed from Maine (where my great-grandfather
built his merchant fleet that sailed around
the Horn) came to our door; each spring from

her sea-world his Scots wife Abigail
swaddled them in damp moss and posted
them West. Then was a flocking of children
tip-toe to clutch table-top waiting

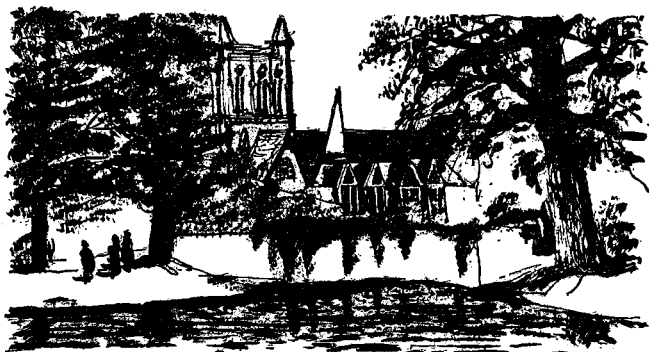
the scissors-snap of string and the tossed
cover—when suddenly all the house
was a throng of pine at Kennebunk
and a deep scent lifted from clustered

petals that would never unbloom. For
my young mother worked wands tipped with pinks,
Hookers green and the umbers to set
them blowing on canvas that sailed our

walls. But the child grows past spring. When late
seasons hurl him lashed-to-mast past the
lightships and he calls to mariners
in his blood who chartered by star, the mind

fastens on small things: a filched sprig prink-
ing a child's pocket from a cardboard
box of New England weather that brimmed
each spring with the turf-clinging arbutus.

SISTER M. THERESE



THE SCREEN

Novels Into Films

MOVIE makers learned a long time ago that when they turn a novel into a film, they must employ movie technique, they must let the camera tell as much of the story as possible, and, no matter how bright the dialogue is, the film has to have movement and action even while portraying character and delving into exposition. An excellent example of a well-made movie is "The Haunting." Scriptwriter Nelson Gidding had the advantage of starting with a good novel in the first place: Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. But well aware of cinematic requirements, he got plenty of movement into his chilling screenplay. And producer-director Robert Wise, using a fine cast, never allows his actors just to stand around and talk (even when they are scared stiff), but puts them through paces that make the frightening Hill House more scary than any place we've seen since Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* was filmed as "The Innocents."

"The Haunting" expects you to believe in ghosts, and Hill House itself is the ghost. Seldom has a movie so successfully brought a house to life—and in such a way that it actually seems to move and menace its occupants. Robert Wise has directed his house as well as his outstanding cast, all of whom merit praise, but especially the four leads: Richard Johnson as the doctor of philosophy whose interest in the supernatural draws him to investigate the haunted mansion; Julie Harris as one of his assistants who seems like an odd choice since she's as neurotic as a fruitcake, but who got the job because of her poltergeist experiences; Claire Bloom as the other assistant, also an odd choice, but this sneering, sophisticated woman is a whiz at extrasensory perception; and Russ Tamblyn as a wise-cracking playboy who majored in Martinis at college but is interested in the whole deal because he will inherit Hill House.

Scene after scene in "The Haunting" will keep audiences on edge as the investigators are overwhelmed and even pursued by the evil house. Fortunately the film has comedy relief—handled mainly by Bloom and Tamblyn—or one wouldn't be able to take the accumulation of terrors. Although everyone connected with the movie deserves commendation, I must agree with that old wise-crack about going somewhere else on my next vacation.

IT IS unfortunate that producer Lewis Allen didn't follow the wise example of Robert Wise in preparing a film treatment and script with a writer when Allen was making "Lord of the Flies." If ever a novel seemed foolproof for cinema it was William Golding's shocking allegorical tale about a group of English schoolboys

marooned on a lush, deserted island where they first try to organize some form of society—and then, alas, turn into savages. While I don't hold with all of Golding's themes, particularly that man is inherently evil and has little choice for free will, I found his story fascinating from beginning to end. Even its many symbols in the characterizations, as well as the fire, Piggy's spectacles, and the Lord of the Flies itself (which can be translated as Beelzebub or the devil) added to its appeal and intrinsically exciting plot.

But producer Allen's movie is a sort of surface-skimming affair. He hired a group of boys, amateurs, to play the youngsters on the island. And director Peter Brook, instead of writing a carefully-planned script, used the book itself as his screenplay. He took the boys to Puerto Rico, guided them in the well-chosen settings, and merely visualized Golding's thoughtful story. The result is a rather flat and haphazard movie in which the characters are not well developed; and one is confronted mostly with a story about the good boys, led by Ralph, versus the bad boys, the Hunters, led by Jack. Ralph and Jack stand out of course, and so does Simon, the mystical lad who wonders if the Beastie they talk about so much isn't really us. Simon also discovers the secret of the Lord of the Flies. But the film actually muffs this episode completely; in it, Simon only looks at the horrible pig's head swarming with flies; in the novel the "lord" talks to Simon, reveals who and what he is, and why the situation has become so depraved.

Because the film is so loosely woven, with the boys being just a bunch of boys (except for one youngster, Hugh Edwards, who is excellent as Piggy), it becomes difficult to identify with the children. We coolly watch their inhumane behavior as two of the boys are killed and finally Ralph is left alone to flee from the Hunters. But we don't project ourselves into the story or follow the allegory as Golding intended. As a straight thriller, the movie deserves some attention. But as a film version of the important, highly provocative Golding novel, this "Lord" has little significance.

USING A similar theme about man's (or boys') cruelty to man is "Reach for Glory." Since I haven't read John Rae's *The Custard Boys* on which it is based, I cannot tell how well it treats the novel. But under Philip Leacock's direction, it uses cinema much better than "Lord of the Flies." It tells a tale of teenage schoolboys who, fearful that World War II will not last long enough for them to get in it, form a militaristic kind of gang in which they become almost like Storm Troopers in their inhuman treatment of non-conformists—whether their victims be schoolmates, teachers, or town boys. One member of the gang, nicely played by Martin Tomlinson, is more sensitive than his fellow thugs, and when he is put in charge of a Jewish refugee boy (skillfully

portrayed by Oliver Grimm) he really tries to be decent to the outsider. Circumstances work against him; and finally the gang's cruelty leads to real tragedy in a heart-breaking scene.

"Reach for Glory" is well acted throughout, and Leacock allows the camera to tell the vicious story more than the equally nasty dialogue. My main argument

with the film, however, is that it is so contrived in its incidents to show the boys' cruel behavior that the whole picture becomes a melodrama. Its well-made anti-war points get lost in a plethora of stacked examples. This is too bad, because the film has something to say, and its director and actors work with sincerity to say it.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

ONE MAN'S FANCY

Tail End of Summer

WILFRID SHEED

THIS IS being written in late Summer, when the tribal attention-span is down to about twenty seconds; when, as everyone knows, man has regressed to using simple implements around a fire and his culture is once again oral, if that; a time, in short, when the written word is in full retreat. In the circumstances, then, this is not so much a column as several feverish stabs at one; starting with the one and a half books I've managed to get through since mankind took to the woods.

Anyone who reads *The Making of a President* and *The Ordeal of Power* in reasonably close succession cannot help noticing certain inflationary tendencies in our political prose. The language, especially Theodore White's, never stops throbbing, the excitement never lets up:—so that after a while the prose has to burst blood-vessels to keep the reader even faintly interested.

We are likely to start off with the big picture: "From the cottonfields of Maine to the clam-fisheries of Idaho, millions of Americans were going about their business, etc." This kind of material is absolutely interchangeable, like those film-clips of trains roaring through the night into a montage of newspapers; no doubt publishers keep yards of it in permanent readiness, to rush into books that call for epic quality and a touch of greatness.

(Incidentally, citizens of smaller countries shouldn't be too disheartened by the field and stream bombast; a variety of scenery and occupation is possible in quite a small area; you could probably produce a similar roll of drums for Luxembourg.)

Next we zero in on the lonely man in the middle (all those people out there, and still he's lonely). We find him pacing the floor in tan slacks, canvas shoes, mohair sweater—Mr. White is especially tremendous at clothing his heroes, from top to toe: from unruly mop of hair

to shoes that, on this greatest day of his life, need a humble shine. The political relevance of this coloring book approach to history may escape you; but the impression is unforgettable, I'm afraid to say.

Well, so there you have this lonely man, outwardly calm, betraying emotion only by the light drumming of his fingers and an occasional flexing of his toes—that's about enough of him for now. Meanwhile in thousands of tiny polling booths in out of the way places, millions of Americans—.

And this brings us to the third feature of this kind of writing: an infatuation with the fact that people are Americans. It is always sixty-eight million Americans who flock to the polls, and five hundred million Americans who watch the TV debates, etc. The point sinks in surprisingly early that these are indeed Americans (if there had ever been any cause to doubt it); but the author feels that we can't be reminded of it too often. I mean, it makes you proud, in a way.

As for the sixty-eight million, there's a lot of that too: never before have so many millions flocked (an unfortunate word, perhaps) to any polls anywhere. This is one of those quaint facts that grows in pointlessness the more you think about it. The national income is now the biggest in history, the school population is the biggest in history, the everything is the biggest in history, at this moment. History simply doesn't compete anymore. Once this simple fact has been grasped, it seems unnecessary to apply it to every single phenomenon.

(Now if the Chinese ever got free elections, we'd see some real flocking; but until that day, every American election will continue to be the biggest election in history; and each time I'm afraid we shall hear about it in those awed voices. . . .)

It should perhaps be added parenthetically, what everyone doubtless knows already, that *The Making of a President* is an absorbingly interesting book. All the more irritating, then, to find these rhetorical tricks,

WILFRID SHEED, author of *A Middle-Class Education* and of the forthcoming *The Hack* (Macmillan), contributes a regular column to these pages.

which any child of twelve can master, inserted at strategic intervals to dress up the subject. Theodore White and Emmet John Hughes (Hughes is slightly the less breathless of the two) used both to work for *Time*, at a period when these tricks were widely in vogue over there; since then I have the impression that *Time* has somewhat de-emphasized the tricks—but its old employees still carry the scars.

The root of the problem seems to be a lack of confidence either in the material or in the reader. The facts of, say, the 1960 election do not require embalmer's cosmetics to make them presentable; they are interesting enough in a state of nature. But the writer of the inflationary school lives in paralytic fear of boring his readers. Unless he jazzes up every incident, fills it with ominous-sounding detail, in a word de-natures it, they will slip away from him.

The depressing thing is that he may be right. T. S. Eliot says that the ordinary man can't stand very much reality. We don't get very much with our politics. These tricks of focus which swing us from the President's breakfast to the wheatfields of New Mexico have made the whole political process seem like something out of Disneyland. The President winds up looking about thirty feet tall and made of cardboard; those drumming fingers of his have begun to sound like something out of Hitchcock. Nothing is quite real.

Our attention is held to the political scene by gag-photography, by perpetual distortion. The really ominous fact is that if our reporters didn't hoke it up in this particular way, we would quite likely take to ignoring the political scene altogether.

FROM a partial (in both senses) reading of *The Group* by Mary McCarthy, I have a feeling that she is the latest author to have been sabotaged by an aesthetic theory. In a previous book, *On the Contrary*, Miss McCarthy argued convincingly for what she called "The fact in fiction"; "The Group" is what she was apparently driving at, and it reads like a kind of Sears Roebuck fiction. Since her case for the fact was just about impeccable, one can only assume that writers should watch out for aesthetic theories, even good ones.

It might be tentatively suggested, though, that in addition to an interest in facts, most of the better fiction-writers have had a powerful distorting mechanism which regularly makes mincemeat out of them. Two shaky examples: Ben Hecht has claimed that Sherwood Anderson had no powers of observation at all, that his Winesburg, Ohio, was nothing but a string of lies. Ford Madox Ford went a step further, and actually wrote *memoirs* which were a string of lies. (Ford's distorting mechanism was so well-developed that I am told he could barely tell truth from fiction; presumably he began to heighten and twist while an event was actually in progress.)

The novelist loves facts, but they often turn out to be his own private facts. The old man's shop that Dickens describes in *Bleak House* is essence of shop, except that, detail for detail, it is an insane shop. In contrast, Miss McCarthy's memory is too accurate; she isn't enough of a liar to be interesting. Her facts, like John O'Hara's, are just facts. Her people have some nice twists; but their "furniture" just sits there.

IN THE HOT weather, with the plays and movies running so long and the books getting so heavy, you find yourself mulling about things like: whither baseball?

All the great national sports seem like permanent things: yet in the eye of a Toynbee, few of them go back further than yesterday afternoon. By tomorrow they may be gone. Like yesterday's gladiators.

To put the thing as pretentiously as possible, popular sports are ritual dramas that act out, and resolve, some aspect of the community situation and character. Bull-fighting is the most spectacular example: a ceremonial dance of death, ritualized to the last detail—which modern Spaniards are deserting in droves, in favor of soccer. (Fortunately it still meets the ritual needs of the tourists.)

Baseball, in this view, is preeminently the city-boy's sport. Its guiding principle is slyness and bluff; its mode of procedure is jerky and frantic; and it has less connection with sportsmanship than any leading sport in the world. ("Nice guys finish last.") Success at baseball—like success at its analogue, poker—requires narrow concentration and unwavering poise; its characteristic situation is that of two men staring each other down, trying to establish a personal ascendancy; a situation, an atmosphere, highly familiar to most city kids. The bean-ball, the up-turned spike and the bench-jockey are all jimmies on the other man's morale. But perhaps the purest piece of symbolism is the argument with the umpire—pure because of its total uselessness, symbolic because it expresses the fundamental, street arab attitude.

In my, admittedly limited, experience, country-boys are somewhat more lackadaisical about their baseball; the outfielders are always liable to mooch off and disappear into the creek; the one or two enthusiasts have to keep rallying the others, to keep them from fooling around. Many country-boys never take to baseball at all. The ritual has no meaning for them at all.

The thesis, then, is that wholesale de-urbanization may eventually cripple baseball. Football has kept pace with the times, by providing other sociological attractions: massive organization, high level planning, big-group efficiency. But baseball is less flexible. Short of further galvanizing the ball (to satisfy power-drives?) there isn't much anyone can do about baseball. So, I can only repeat, whither it?

Another Look at the Rosenberg Case

The Betrayers. By Jonathan Root. Coward-McCann. \$5.

by William H. Dempsey, Jr.

ACCORDING TO its publishers, *The Betrayers* is "the first dispassionate, objective assessment of the Spy Case of the Century." In point of fact, the book in large part reads like the story of the Rosenbergs as told by a great many people to Gerold Frank.

One wonders what to say about a purportedly historical work larded with passages like this: "At some point Ethel [Rosenberg] learned to equate in her mind a pair of unrealities: on one side was a warped image of life as she knew it, on the other a life of glamour and beauty. She rejected the first in favor of an earnest expectation of the second."

This calls for immediate scrutiny of the author's bibliography. There, surprisingly, one finds this sober statement: "The number of persons who contributed personal knowledge of the Rosenberg case have been few. I relied, instead, on the record. . . . I have discovered that human recollections, including my own, are subject to self-redeeming modification. . . ."

What "record," one might ask, disclosed that "Ethel was astonished at her new ability to recognize the symptoms of fascism in her employer. . . ." Or that "Julius did not seem to know that when the snow melted, nothing would be changed. He had curly blond hair and rich blue eyes and it was hard to tell him the truth."

Nevertheless, if one has a high enough pain threshold to get through the "psychoanalysis of a spy" portions of the book, he will find it useful. For the most part, the author's description of the trial, the appeals, and the violent worldwide controversy over the sentence is competent and reasonably restrained.

Such an amalgam of good and bad in a book is always curious. In many cases, of course, the explanation is simply the author's desire to produce a best seller and his notion that the

best way to do this is to embellish his work with "color." In this instance, however, it is possible that the explanation lies, in part at least, in the author's apparently ambiguous view of the ultimate significance of the Rosenberg case and his sometimes faltering effort to cover all points of view.

There are many who see the case primarily in terms of what it may disclose about aberrant individual behavior. Thus, the question becomes: What sort of person could commit treason against the United States? The tone of such an inquiry is sometimes scholarly, sometimes xenophonic, but for whatever reason, perhaps absence of sufficient data, Mr. Root manages to avoid both poles and produces little more than occasional distressing flights of fancy. But at least he seems to be trying to answer a substantial question.

Another point of view is that the principal significance of the Rosenberg episode lies not in what it discloses about the defendants, but rather in what the public reaction to the case suggests about our national character. Mr. Root regards this question as of some consequence also, and this time he deals with it intelligently, though tentatively.

In this sense the most important aspect of the case was the imposition of the death sentence, which was really at the heart of the public controversy. As to this, on the one hand, the espionage was committed at a time when Russia was officially regarded as a great war ally; there was doubt that the espionage had been nearly as important as the sentencing judge thought; sentences imposed by British courts on Klaus Fuchs and Alan Nunn May, who probably did immeasurably more damage than the Rosenbergs, were incomparably lighter; and the final denial of review by the Supreme Court, so hurriedly that Justice Frankfurter refused even to vote, hardly inspired a greater measure of confidence.

On the other hand, there was no solid doubt as to guilt; possibly the espionage had been important; and the Rosenbergs were unrepentant to the end.

On the whole, opinion in this country supported the execution of the Rosenbergs, while foreign opinion, of which the Communist-inspired protests were only a marginal expression, was opposed. Does this signify anything beyond identifying whose ox was being gored? What was the most appropriate response of a civilized society? While the reader will not find an answer in *The Betrayers*, he will find many of the facts essential to a judgment.

Chapters from the Kerouac Gospel

Visions of Gerard. By Jack Kerouac. Farrar, Straus. \$3.95.

by Thomas Curley

SOMEWHERE in *Hamlet*, after one of the Prince's speeches, Horatio replies dryly, "You might have rhymed." After reading Mr. Kerouac's *Visions of Gerard*, that reply would be appropriate. Any other direct criticism of the book as a book, as a "literary" work seems impertinent.

Let me, then, be impertinent. This is a book about Kerouac's brother, Gerard, who died at the age of nine when the author was four. Kerouac feels the event so deeply and remem-

bers, or remembers in such detail, that one feels, as one reads, like an intruder, not like a hilarious drunk come upon a family grieving, but like some sobersides come as an official observer of a family's sorrow. They should kick you out, or you should leave and merely write the death notice, merely write, as Kerouac himself does in the first part of his first sentence: "Gerard Duluoze was born in 1917 a sickly little kid with a rheumatic heart and many other complications that made him ill for the most part of his life with in July 1926, when he was 9. . . ."

But, then, Jack Kerouac published the book, gave it to the world, the

world of critics and cynics, of entrepreneurs, of trend-finders and trend-watchers. Gave it to the world in what form? Of history? Of fiction? Let's suppose it's true to fact but to be viewed as fiction; let's counter-suppose it's fiction but to be viewed as fact. The mere act of publication makes it fair game and Mr. Kerouac, willingly and without complaint, is subject to President Truman's sound advice: If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.

As fact, as history, I can offer no criticism of the work; but as fiction, however "factual," let me say briefly what I find wrong. Listen to Kerouac: "Hearken, amigos, to the olden message: it's neither what you think it is, nor what you think it isn't, but an elder matter, uncompounded and clear—Pigs may rut in field, come running to the Soo-Call, full of sow-y-gee; people may count themselves higher than pigs, and walk proudly down country roads; geniuses may look out of windows and count themselves higher than louts; tics in the pine needles may be inferior to the swan; but whether any of these and the stone know it, it's still the same truth: none of it is even there, it's a mind movie, *believe* this if you will and you'll be saved in the solvent solution of salvation. . . ."

Now you may or may not like the swing of Kerouac's lingo (I do), but you either have to *believe*, as he says, that it is all a "mind movie" or you are not with it. I am not with it. Facts are flexible; they move and shift and turn inside out, but that they were, are, and will be *there* is, to my mind, indisputable, and so I cannot believe and be saved according to the gospel of Jack Kerouac; and if you cannot believe and be saved according to that gospel, I think the *Visions of Gerard* will fail to illuminate your matter-darkened mind. So be it. Ainsi soit-il, as Kerouac says.

As a work of fiction, then, *Visions of Gerard* fails because Kerouac never releases Gerard to the reader; it is always his Gerard, his brother, who is dying, has died. We can't judge him because we are never allowed to meet him directly; he is a saint from first to last and critics had better leave saints alone.

Anthony Powell's Microscopic Lens

What's Become of Waring. By Anthony Powell. Little, Brown. \$4.

by Richard McLaughlin

THIS EARLIER novel, preceding Anthony Powell's *Music of Time* series by at least a decade, bears dazzling evidence of the satiric talents on which his reputation was first made. V. S. Pritchett has described him as England's "foremost comic writer," a citation that U.S. readers, discovering Powell's dry humor for the first time, readily support. Of course, there are those who point out that the appeal of his novels in this country is mainly a snobbish one. These dissenters are found for the most part among chauvinists and Anglophobes. But as their breed has always been with us, the best policy, perhaps, is to ignore them.

Whether you're what Logan Pearsall Smith would call a Powell "milver" or just a discriminating reader who knows penetrating wit when he sees it, one fact remains undisputed—when it comes to social comedy novelist Powell has very few rivals.

Less waspish than Evelyn Waugh and much more realistic, he manages to make the most of life's coincidences and fortuitous events. Indeed, he serves up an entertainment that, for all its ironic detachment, borders on farce. And what delectable farce it is, too! The highly frenetic antics of the London literary world in the thirties are sardonically pinpointed in a tale that might best be described as semi-autobiographical. For like the book's narrator, the author has worked as an editor in a London publishing house and there is little in the way of the ludicrous or eccentric that has escaped his attention.

The plot centers on a celebrated English travel-book author whose incognito has been so successful that neither his publishers nor his public have ever seen him. However, when T. T. Waring is reported dead, no one, least of all his many fans, is prepared for the startling truth behind the mystery of his identity.

It turns out that Waring is a scape-

grace and a fraud. The intrepid explorer, idolized by his readers, is an adventurer. Disowned by his upper class family and thrown out of England, it seems he has been living by his wits. This includes everything from lifting material out of other writers' travel books, and calling it his own, to marrying an elderly American heiress who buys him a yacht. But before all this is disclosed and Waring's idolators have had their illusions thoroughly shattered, Powell introduces us to several likely characters, and many more just as unlikely, who were involved with Waring both before and after his so-called demise. These people show up at the oddest places—a seance where "the spirit sought was that of George Eliot" who likes to be called Mimi and whose audience sings "Little Brown Jug" to reach her; a drably festive territorial ball; the sun-drenched Riviera where black sheep are almost as numerous as yachtsmen on a holiday; and a country house owned by the erratic Pimley clan.

Passion plays no more a part here than it does in any of Trollope's novels. Love affairs are talked about but there are never any round-for-round verbatim reports of these contests between the sexes. Our author treads warily among his lovers, approaching their entanglements largely through suggestion and indirection. It's a welcome relief from the inch-by-inch school of clinical reporting in U.S. fiction. His women characters, though appealingly feminine, are invariably regarded as dangerous necessities, as delightful playthings that must needs be humored but never given the upper hand.

With Roberta Payne, the enchantress in the book, Powell is as guarded as ever. "Roberta was a tall girl with large black eyes which had a trick of increasing in area when she looked at you. Her way of walking was also provocative. She always made a lot of fuss about her poverty and her journalism. The little articles she wrote were often amusing, but they could not possibly have kept her alive. She was usually so well housed and dressed that it was generally

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MACMILLAN

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supposed that obscure rich men, too dull to be allowed to appear, contributed something to her upkeep. At least, she was believed never to have love-affairs within her own circle of friends. That was what people said about her. Roberta was a charming creature, though you could rarely believe all she told you." And his guard is still up with Beryl Pimley, Captain "Tiger" Hudson's fiancée. "Like so many girls whose lot has been to lead dull lives, her manner implied that all men were her slaves. Hudson naturally figured as her most notable vassal. She was clearly proud of having captured him."

Subtly observing the idiosyncrasies of a pre-war London society, Powell views it all through a microscopic

lens. Again he is like Trollope in that his mimicry knows no barriers. The English upper classes and the fringes of the literary world are his main targets, but he would appear to know all levels of society well enough to spot in any one of them the comic side of their follies and foibles.

REVIEWERS

William H. Dempsey, Jr., a frequent contributor, was formerly Chief Law Clerk to Chief Justice Warren.

Thomas Curley is the author of the recent novel, *Past Eve and Adam's* (Atheneum).

Richard McLaughlin is co-editor of *Music of the Mind: 1000 Years of European Poetry* (Grosset & Dunlop).

ART

Popular Art: Images, not Objects

THE MOST significant thing about pop art, the genre that became famous overnight after the Sidney Janis show in New York last October—cheering some people up tremendously and depressing others further about contemporary art—is that it presents images of images. Pop artists are fascinated by the popular image of an object rather than the object itself. These stereotyped images are taken out of their "commercial" context and handled in such a way that "esthetic emotion replaces the functional use," according to Alice Rewald.

Comic strips, advertisements, posters, signs, films, etc., are the resources upon which the pop artist draws; now and then a shoe or a shirtsleeve is thrown in bodily to enhance the double meaning of his procedure rather than, like the Dadaists, to startle one into seeing this "found object" afresh or to prove that anything can be art. A great deal more can be said about pop art, but I think this is the heart of the matter; it is a curious turn in the road for an artist to take, but neither as cheering nor as depressing as its most passionate commentators seem to think. Like any other kind of painting or sculpture its value rests on what use is made of it, and there

are one or two very gifted artists making use of the idiom and producing what is really cheering, good results.

In a review of the Guggenheim show *Six Artists & the Object* in *Newsweek* the question is asked: "Is Roy Lichtenstein's Ice Cream Soda less valid as a subject for a painting than Chardin's Bowl of Fruit?" This is of course a silly question, as it is up to the artist to make his subject valid, which Chardin incomparably does. However, the chief literal thing that is wrong with the question is that Lichtenstein's subject is *not* an ice cream soda but an *advertisement* for an ice cream soda.

As usual, it is not much use to go to the artists themselves to find out why they are taking this road. Although the critic Brian O'Doherty has said in the New York *Times* that pop art is "American satire of America's mass market," Andy Warhol, a pop artist, says he paints Campbell soup cans because "they are beautiful things that you use every day." It would seem from this that Warhol's intention is almost the same as a Dada artist's. Robert Indiana, another pop artist, says that his art has nothing to do with Dada and that he was inspired by a reaction against Abstract Expressionism which he

found ugly, subjective, formless and disorganized. Indiana's sign paintings—The American Dream in its several versions, for instance, seen in the New York Museum of Modern Art's *Americans 1963* show—bears out his temperamental antagonism to abstract expressionism but also suggests that Mr. O'Doherty may be right, even if the artist won't come right out and admit it.

Perhaps Warhol's statement should be taken with a grain of salt too because, if you look at his ad-like Campbell soup cans or his painting called *Marilyn* which imitates continuous strips of identical photographs of Marilyn Monroe, you might reasonably think the artist intended to satirize mass culture.

In fact my own impression is that Mr. O'Doherty is right, and that his is the only rational assumption to make about American pop art in general. However it leaves out an all-important factor, the ambivalence of an artist's attitude toward anything he is satirizing and his overriding objective to create something that communicates an *esthetic* emotion. In the case of Jasper Johns' *Three Flags* (in the Guggenheim show) for instance, if anything satirical was in his original intention, which I doubt, it was utterly lost along the way, because the three superimposed American flags of different sizes simply reverberate patriotic fervor.

I think the better and more successful a pop artist is, the less a satirical objective is paramount in the effect of his work, whether it launched the project or not.

Although the work of the artist called Marisol—several of her sculptures appear in the MMA *Americans 1963* show—is plainly satirical, the satire is wrapt in esthetic enchantment of an intense and volatile nature. *The Family*, like a pathetic posed photograph of flattened characters, confronts the viewer with a deprecatory challenge and *The Bathers*, lifelike yet lifeless, juts out into the viewer's space like a displaced display of window-dummies. Both these works are of painted wood and plaster and other odds and ends (like sneakers) but add up to coherent, haunting formal statements rather than just obvious irony. *The Generals*, a portrait-pastiche of Bolivar and Washington on a hobby-horse, is a delicious visual fantasy; and the *Mona Lisa*, a superbly painted wooden panel with a pair of meek plaster hands below, seems to achieve a restatement of a "popular" master statement, lightly mocked. These satirical works are parables with an organic esthetic existence.

If art is nature seen through a temperament, pop art is popular or commercial images seen through a temperament. This may at first appear to be a desperate expedient, but the artist's temperament and the Divine Spark of his creative skill can, and has, made something of it.

BETTY KAUFMAN

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